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ABSTRACT

Repeated readings, story retellings, and dramatic reentactments allow students to become more aware of stories and more familiar with the structure of the stories. Another comprehension strategy is a cloze procedure called the story frame. A story frame uses phrases such as: "This story begins when"; "and then"; "next"; "following that"; or, "the problem is solved when." Students add key phrases or clauses that summarize the story or highlight some important aspect of the story. Students may need to develop more than one story frame since not all stories have the same elements. The strategy is particularly useful with middle school students who are developing summarizing skills and other basic analytic approaches to literature. A figure shows five types of story frames which may be appropriate for all types of stories: story summary with one character; important idea or plot; setting; character analysis; and character comparison. The following list of six questions helps create a story frame: (1) Is there a problem? (2) If so, why is it a problem? (3) Is there a relevant sequence of events that leads to a solution to the problem? (4) If so, what is the sequence? (5) How is the problem resolved? and (6) How does the story end? Some samples of students' story frames serve as illustrations of the technique. (CR)

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Using Story Frames to Develop Reading Comprehension in the Classroom

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In the last decade comprehension research has encouraged teachers to give their students opportunities to becoming more engaged in literature. Repeated readings, story retellings, and dramatic reenactments allow students to become more aware of stories and more familiar with their structure. This article provides an overview of another type of comprehension strategy: the story frame.

The term story frame can refer to a number of methods for looking at a story's structure. For my purpose, the story frame is a cloze procedure. However, instead of only one word being left out of a sentence, key phrases or clauses are left out of a paragraph that summarizes the story or highlights some important aspect of it.

Using story frames along with the basic elements of story grammar directs both students' and teachers' attention to the actual structure of the story and how the content fits that structure. The strategy is particularly useful with middle school students who are developing summarizing skills and other basic analytic approaches to literature.

Story frames can be used with basal stories as well as trade books. However, because not all the elements in a specific story frame are present in all stories, it may be necessary for the students to develop more than one story frame or change previously

CS 012446

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used story frames to fit the passage. For example, you may start with "This story begins when..." and add "and then". Following this you may add words that appropriately follow the sequence of events such as, "next", "following that," or "the problem is solved when..."

Students' ability to monitor their comprehension may be enhanced by using story frames. Students have an opportunity to review the main idea of the story, clarify parts they may not have understood, and decide on the author's purpose for writing the story (See Gerald L. Fowler, "Developing Comprehension Skills in Primary Students Through The Use Of Story Frames, The Reading Teacher, vol, 36, 1982, pp. 176-179).

Figure 1 shows five types of story frames that may be appropriate for all types of stories; however, you will probably find that one or two of them will fit your style purpose more readily. I suggest you first introduce students to one of the simpler types of frames after they have completed reading a story. Initially, the whole class may complete the cloze activity posed by the story frame. Story frames also lend themselves to cooperative group work or a reading partner format. After students become more adept at using each type of story frame, they may use frames as advance organizers to monitor their own comprehension as they read.

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Figure 1

Types of story frames

Story Summary With One Character

Our story is about _____

_____ is an important character in our story.

_____ tried to _____.

The story ends when _____.

Important Idea Or Plot

In this story the problem starts when _____.

After that, _____. Next, _____.

Then, _____.

The problem is finally solved when _____.

The story ends _____.

Setting

This story takes place _____.

I know this because the author uses the words " _____ ".

Other clues that show when the story takes place are: _____

_____.

Character Analysis

_____ is an important character in this story.

_____ is important because _____.

Once, he/she _____.

Anothertime, _____.

I think that _____ is _____

(character's name) (character's trait)

because _____.

Character Comparison

_____ and _____ are two characters in this story.

_____ is _____ while

(character name) (character trait)

_____ is _____.

(other character) (trait)

For instance, _____ tries to _____.

_____ learns a lesson when _____.

The following questions can help you create your own story frame: 1) Is there a problem? 2) If so, why is it a problem? 3) Is there a relevant sequence of events that leads to a solution to the problem? 4) If so, what is the sequence? 5) How is the problem resolved? 6) How does the story end? Similar questions might be asked to generate a story frame related just to character(s) or setting. After answering these questions, look over the basic frame to make sure it will fit the cloze procedure. If not, often the addition or deletion of a few words will

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generally correct the problem.

When introducting story frames, tell the students that when they complete a frame they will have a summary or a short way of retelling the story that they have just read. You may want to begin with half-page frames because they are less intimidating to students learning this process (See Karen Wood, "Probable Passages:A Writing Strategy," The Reading Teacher, vol. 37, 1984, pp. 496-499).

As students develop their story frames based on a story they just read, be sure to monitor their progress. The following is two examples of story frames that were developed by high school remedial reading students. You will see, as we went back over the story and frame, the students self-corrected their writing. (On The Air, Visions, 1988).

Student Story Frames

The story takes place in Sydney, Australia. Kirsty is a character in the story who almost wants to go home and lives in the outback. Cathi is another character in the story who is good friends with Kirsty and tries to convince her to give the outback a second chance. A problem occur when Kirsty dreamas homesick. After that Cathi and Kirsty go to have tea and talk about the advantages about staying the outback. The problem about Kirsty leaving the outback is left unanswered. The story end with Kirsty meeting Jack, her pal from the school "On the Air", and still undecided about leaving the outback.

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Story Frame - Call the Air

The story takes place in Sydney, Australia. Kristy is a character in the story. Who lives in the Outbacks. Celia is another character in the story who is good friends with Kristy, and tys to convinces her to give the outbacks another chance a problem occurs when Kristy becomes a recession. After the Celia and Kristy talks about advantages about staying in the Outbacks. The Problem about Kristy leaving the Outbacks is left unresolved. The story ends with Kristy writing Jacki, her ~~good~~ pal from the school "on the air", and still undecided about leaving the outbacks.

The main purpose of the story frame is to encourage students to rethink some aspect of the story. They can refer back to the passage if necessary as they complete the frame. As with any reading activity, the more engaged and enthusiastic your students are about the content, the more effective the strategy will be.

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